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HEROIC BOYS AND GIRLS.

Stories of Youthful Saints.

FOR VALOUR.

Stories of Men of world-wide Fame and
How they won the Fight.

BRITISH JEWELS IN THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM.

Stories of England's Saints for Young
Readers.

PEASANTS WHO HAVE WON CROWNS.

Stories of Holy Lives.

RULERS WHO WERE SUBJECTS.

Stories of Kings, Queens, and Bishops.

WHAT CHANGED THEIR LIVES?

Striking Episodes from Lives of Saints.



OR VALOUR : STORIES
OF MEN OF WORLD-WIDE
FAME, AND HOW THEY
WON THE FIGHT

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INTRODUCTION

DEAR BOYS AND GIRLS,

You will find in this book the stories of some of the great Saints of God. We might call them men who have won a V.C. in God's army.

You know how much we love and honour men who win the Victoria Cross, don't you? Well, these men were all very brave and courageous, and they were fighting for God, and He gave them strength to win their battles against Satan and Sin and Self.

Even you little children have battles to fight against the same three enemies, and I am quite sure you are all going to try and win too. The same God who helped them will

help you, if you only ask Him. All these brave Soldiers of God loved Our Lady very much too ; she was their Queen and Mother, and if you love God, you will also love His Mother and will ask her to pray that you may be a brave and true soldier of Jesus Christ.

Your sincere friend,

L. M.

1914.

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FOUNDER OF THE JESUITS

S. IGNATIUS



AT the old Castle of Loyola, a little child was born in the year 1491, who received in baptism the name of Inigo which he afterwards changed for that of Ignatius. Ours is not a history of a saintly childhood and the wondrous holiness of very early years, for this boy was gay and brilliant amongst the young pages of the court of Ferdinand; and though we hear that he never gave himself to gambling and other such amusements, it seems as if his highest ambition was fixed on deeds of courage, whilst his favourite occupation was the reading of tales of romance and chivalry.

At about the age of twenty-six years, he

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began to carry arms, and was brave in the defence of his country and his king; but in one contest when Ignatius was fighting courageously, wishing to die rather than retreat, a cannon-ball broke the bone of his right leg, and he fell to the ground, and the French became masters of the citadel, making him their prisoner. But his bravery had so won their admiration that they treated him with great courtesy, and, as his wound needed much care, he received permission to go to his own country, where he was conveyed on a litter. The surgeons declared that a terrible operation must take place, to which Ignatius consented willingly, and bore it without allowing any signs of pain to escape him, but his health grew worse afterwards, and he became very ill from fever. The night before the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul, the doctors considered his life in great danger; he had received the last Sacraments in preparation for death, and few had any hope of his recovery, but, at midnight, Ignatius had a vision of S. Peter, to whom he

had always a particular devotion, promising him that he should recover his health. From that moment a change begun, the fever subsided, and his wound slowly healed, but it was found that through the unskilful operation he had borne, one leg was shorter than the other, and he would never be able to walk without showing this disfigurement. Ignatius inquired if there was no remedy possible, and, when he was told that the only thing would be for the bone to be cut away with a saw, he allowed it to be done, never even shrinking during the pain; but all was in vain, there was no cure for the lameness, and the brave young soldier knew that his dreams of victory and honour were over.

As he lay on his sick-bed, Ignatius called for books to pass away the weary hours; he had always loved to read of the gallant deeds of high-born knights and cavaliers, and his thoughts returned to them now in his weakness, but they had not the tales he loved in the old Castle of Loyola, and as none were to

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be found, they carried him the Lives of the Saints. It was indeed a happy thing for him—it was God's time for speaking to his heart, calling him to rise from his dreams of enterprise and romance and turn his energy and zeal against the enemies of his soul so that he might fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, as a good, true soldier of Jesus Christ.

On that bed of weakness, during the silent nights and weary days of pain, Ignatius thought over his life—those worldly hopes and longings which had been like a cloud between him and his God, and he made his choice of a different future. Yes, it should be all changed now, he would take up the battle against sin, he would fight for the kingdom of God, and live to be what his Lord would have him.

One night when he was praying before an image of the Blessed Virgin—offering himself through her to God—a sudden shock like an earthquake seemed to shake the house and the

room he was in, so that the frames of the windows were broken. Another time, Mary herself appeared to him with the Divine Child in her arms and remained speaking with him until his heart was full of peace and sweetness. This made Ignatius more anxious to obey the call of God and begin a different life, and, as soon as he was able to take the journey, he told his brother of his purpose of leaving Loyola.

After bidding farewell to his family and starting towards Mont Serrat, he obtained a pilgrim's dress with a cord for a girdle and hempen shoes, together with a staff and shell, and strapping them upon his mule, he rode slowly along the rocky path to a church and place of pilgrimage, where he made a general confession of his whole life, and sought advice as to his future.

Three days Ignatius remained at Mont Serrat, and then, leaving his mule for the use of the monastery, and suspending his sword and dagger by the altar of the Blessed Virgin, he

went slowly and painfully along his way to Manresa, where he desired to live unknown and uncared for, doing penance for the sins and follies of the past. He set apart seven hours every day for prayer, he allowed scarce any time for sleep, lying on the ground with a stone or piece of wood for his pillow. Three times a day he scourged himself severely, and took for his food hard and blackened crusts, or vegetables sprinkled with ashes. Once Ignatius had loved and sought for admiration and esteem, now he put it far from him, and when the children mocked him and shouted, "Here comes the man in sackcloth," he bore it not only patiently but with joy.

For some months, he attended upon the sick at the hospital at Manresa, conquering all the natural dislike he had for the terrible complaints and vulgar habits of the people he found there; but afterwards he sought a more solitary life, and made his abode in a cavern not far off, where he increased his prayers and penances. Terrible temptations from the devil

beset him there, in which he called upon God to deliver him; but other visions came of heavenly sweetness for his relief, and thus ten months passed by. Then God pointed out to him a work to do among men. He called upon him to leave his retirement by putting upon his heart that burning love for souls which gave him the spirit of an Apostle. From that moment one thought was in the mind of Ignatius—he must go forth into the world to make known the love of God to men; so he left his cavern home, and changing his hermit dress for a shorter garment of coarse gray cloth, journeyed to Barcelona, where he remained some twenty days, begging his daily bread, and visiting the hospitals and prisons. His desire was to sail for Italy, and, having obtained a free passage, he went on board the vessel, first laying on a stone five or six pieces of money which had been given him, so that he might faithfully keep his resolution of perfect poverty. Landed at the port of Gaïeta, he travelled on foot to Rome, where he obtained the blessing of the

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Pope, but only remained a few days, as his aim was to reach Jerusalem and visit the spots made sacred by the human life of Christ.

It was not only a pilgrimage he was making; Ignatius wished also to bring together a company of men to teach the truths of the Catholic Church, but the Franciscan Fathers already there thought it would not be wise to remain, and, submitting to their opinion, he arranged to leave Jerusalem, and, after many difficulties, sailed for Italy, passing on to Spain.

Once more at Barcelona, Ignatius returned to a life of great penance and prayer, and God gave him many graces and signs of His love. During his stay in that city, three young men came to Ignatius, wishing to follow him, and belong to the Order he intended to found, and thus began the Society of Jesus, which is now known in every part of the Christian world. Their special work has always been to do good to souls, and from the first, S. Ignatius was very successful in winning people to love and

serve God. From place to place he travelled preaching the crucified Saviour, adding to his Society, teaching the Christian doctrine—like Jesus, his master, he was misjudged, wrongfully accused, and even imprisoned, but God's blessing was with him, and every difficulty only brought more success.

Thus Ignatius lived until the year 1554, when his health began to be very weak, so that he was obliged to have help in the great work of governing his society; but early in the summer of 1556 his illness grew so much worse, that he himself felt very sure he should not live long. On the 31st of July he died almost suddenly, for although he was very feeble, no one expected that he would be gone so soon, and his soul passed to God with the greatest peace and calmness, nothing unusual happening at that time. It is thought that, in his deep humility, he may have sought this as a favour from God, for he had always tried to conceal the special gifts he received, but we know he *did* pray that the Society of Jesus

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might be especially hated by the world, as their Master was, and this prayer has been granted.

Those who hate the true faith, hate above all the Jesuits, and their name alone is used as a reproach; in almost every land they have been allowed to shed their blood as martyrs for the truth, and from many countries they have been turned away, for teaching men to know God, and repent of their sins against Him; but through all they have pursued their way, doing their works of mercy without seeking any reward on earth, taking as their standard the Cross of Jesus, and for their motto "To the greater glory of God." *This*, then, has been the work of the once brave young Spanish soldier, who became a far braver and nobler soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ; *this* was the fulfilment of the purposes he formed upon his sick-bed, when he promised his life, and strength, and all that he had to be given to the love and service of God.

A MODEL OF PURITY

S. ALOYSIUS



It has always pleased Almighty God to raise up saints for some special purpose—either to be our example of holiness in the world or in the cloister, sometimes models of penance or of prayer; but each one has had a distinct and clear vocation, which is to be the means of usefulness to others, for whose good their virtues are made fully known, when they have passed from this life to the life of heaven.

In this way, it seems as if Louis Gonzaga, afterwards called Aloysius, was to be a special example of holiness to children and youths, for his short life of twenty-three years was full of piety and sweetness from his birth. His good

mother greatly desired to have a son, and she prayed earnestly that it might be God's Will that this happiness should be given her, promising that her first child should be put, in a special way, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and on the 9th March, 1568, the little Louis came into the world to her very great joy. On the day of his baptism the whole town was arrayed for a feast, guns fired in honour of the baby prince, who came of such a noble family, and bright flowers strewn along the road from the castle to the church, where he was to be made a child of God. Money was thrown freely amongst the crowd, who shouted "Long life to the Prince! May he be happy above all!" and there was merriment and grandeur in the Italian city, whilst the angels in heaven were filled with joy because a soul had been created to bring God such glory. Even during the first few weeks of his life, this little infant was observed to have so unusually sweet an expression on his face, that the person who nursed him, often said she felt as if she was

holding a little angel from heaven in her arms, rather than an earthly child. Every day his mother made the sacred sign of the cross with his own little hand, repeating to him the Names of Jesus and Mary, and therefore she had the joy of hearing them lisped as his first words. He quickly learned the Our Father and Hail Mary with his baby tongue, and as soon as he could toddle about, would hide himself behind some curtains or pieces of furniture, where he was found with his hands folded in prayer. Marta, his mother, rejoiced to see this promise of holiness in her little son, but the Marquis would gladly have had him more spirited and boisterous ; so before Louis was four years old, he took him out of the hands of his nurses, and put him under a tutor who he thought would better train the child to keep up the honour and dignity of his noble family. Just at this time the Christian countries of Europe had been gaining great victories over the infidels, and a fresh body of men had been gathered together under the

command of the Marquis, who were to be given a month's training in Casal, to prepare them for war.

It seemed to the father such a good opportunity for giving little Louis a military taste, that he determined, in spite of his mother's fear, to take him there. So the boy of four years was clothed in the dress of a soldier, with helmet and plume, sword, belt, and powder-flask, and then led to bid his mother farewell.

Louis was a great favourite in the camp, and showed so much skill and sense that even his father was satisfied; once, however, when discharging his firearm, the powder exploded in his face, so, although his skin only was slightly injured, he was not allowed to have it about him any more. But it would seem that the baby-soldier had a little desire to exhibit his courage to the rest, for, after this, he crept away unnoticed one day to the camp, and loaded and discharged a little cannon which he found there. The soldiers, who had been taking

their rest, started in alarm to their feet. Even the Marquis was anxious as to the cause of the explosion, and sent to discover what had happened, declaring that he would punish the offender, little supposing it to be his own Louis. When his messenger informed the Marquis what the child had done, he tried to look very severe and still threatened punishment for the offence, but when every voice called out, "Pardon, pardon, for the little prince!" he was quickly forgiven and more admired for his courage than before. In after years, the Saint said he felt sure that but for the special protection of God, he must have been instantly killed then, and he reproached himself keenly for having stolen the powder from one of the men so as to accomplish his scheme unknown to them.

But the end of the month came, the Marquis set forth with his troops, and Louis was sent home to his mother under the charge of his tutor and servants. As they journeyed, it was noticed that he had learned some bad words

from the soldiers which he made use of without understanding, and the tutor reproved him for doing so, telling him what pain and sorrow it would be to his mother if she heard him. Louis cried bitterly, promising never to speak so again, and he faithfully kept his word, nor could he ever hear an improper expression fall from the lips of others without showing the greatest distress.

This sin, done so childishly and ignorantly, was the great offence of his life in the confessions of later years, and so pure was his heart that four different priests, who were aware of all that had passed in his soul from his earliest days, have felt sure that he never lost the grace of his baptism.

At seven years old, when it was explained to him that he had reached the age of reason, he set himself to begin afresh to please God, and to practise in trifling ways that love of penance which grew up with him. He would repeat the Penitential Psalms and other devotions every day upon his knees, refusing to

use the cushions which, like the rest of the family, he had always knelt upon before. Two years later, he was left in the city of Florence until he was eleven years old, and during that time he was most diligent in his studies, most obedient in performing every duty as a work done for God. On festival days, he was taken to pay a visit to the Grand-Duke, but then he would try to get quietly away from the noisy party of children to amuse himself in making little altars or in speaking of heavenly things. Yet, by doing so, he did not make himself unattractive to his companions, indeed, they all loved him for his great gentleness and patience, and many tried to turn from evil habits in imitation of Louis Gonzaga.

At this time, the little boy began to think a great deal about the roots of those faults he perceived in himself; he had always been very sorry for the least offence, confessing it with tears for having grieved the good God, but now that he was older, he set to work to find and destroy the very beginning of every imperfect

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feeling in his soul, and thus his meekness and humility became wonderful. Many lads of his age forget the kindness and respect due to those who serve and attend them, but Louis would ask for what he needed as humbly and sweetly as if he had been begging a favour from a superior. He was equally careful that no want of charity should be in his heart or upon his lips, and finding it so difficult to avoid seeing the mistakes and failings of other people, he tried to retire from them as much as was possible to do unobserved, so that he might avoid the slightest temptation to fall even into trifling faults of this kind.

There was a church in the city of Florence where this saintly boy loved especially to pray, and here his great reverence for the Blessed Virgin increased daily, until he felt as if he knew not how to prove his devotion to her. In this church there was a miraculous picture of the Blessed Virgin, and one day it struck Louis, as he knelt before it, that his dear Mother Mary would be pleased if he gave her the promise never to

love any human creature, or bind himself by any tie to this life, keeping all his affection for her and for God. So at the feet of his favourite picture, the boy of ten years made this offering to Mary Immaculate, who obtained for him the grace of perfect purity in thought and action until his death, as a reward for his generous love.

It was not long after, that Louis fell into a state of ill-health which could only be cured by abstinence from many agreeable kinds of food, and this so accustomed him to deny his appetite that after he was well, he kept the strictest rule over himself with regard to what he ate and drank, scarcely taking sufficient to support his life. In this respect, Louis certainly obeyed a special inspiration of God such as is rarely given to children; but though it would be wrong for those who are very young to decide for themselves to fast as this Saint did his abstinence may teach a lesson to those who are fanciful about their food, and indulge themselves in so many things which are not needed for their health and strength.

This life of regular study, prayer, and solitude, in the city of Florence, gave Louis so strong a desire to keep himself from the society of the world as he grew older, that he resolved to give up all the wealth and grandeur which, as the eldest son of a noble family, were his own, and let his younger brother Ridolfo take his place, but being still so young he did not talk of these plans, keeping them secretly in his heart until the proper time should come for making them known.

When the Marquis sent for his boys to return home, Marta clasped her first-born child in her arms with the greatest joy, but she saw that the bloom of health had left his face, and he looked slight and delicate, yet she could not grieve, because the mark of his purity of soul seemed to appear upon his face, and that was more precious in her eyes than the round fresh cheek and sturdy form which he had three years before.

On reaching home Louis did not lessen his time for prayer, on the contrary, he was

more and more given to it, kneeling for a length of time motionless before his crucifix, with tears flowing fast, because he felt so unworthy of God's great mercy and love. On festivals he would go and teach poor children the Christian doctrine, but with such modesty and sweetness, that even older persons liked to listen to the instructions and advice he gave. Thus Louis's daily life passed on until the time approached for his First Communion, and we may partly imagine with what burning love and deep humility he desired the day when he should receive his Lord within his breast.

The great S. Charles Borromeo came to stay near the house of the Gonzagas just then, and amongst the crowd of people who listened to his preaching, he noticed this little boy, with the light of a lovely soul shining upon his face, and spent a good deal of time in talking with him, and it was from his hands that the young Saint received the Body and Blood of Jesus for the first time.

After that day his love for the Blessed Sacrament became more and more intense ; he advanced rapidly in holiness, and with all he preserved the same humble sorrow for sins which were so slight that his confessors were astonished at the immense grace God poured out upon him, in keeping him so pure and spotless. The purpose which had once sprung up in the heart of Louis to renounce the world, and his noble position in it, was growing stronger now, and as he prayed, God showed him clearly that his place must be in religion, so although he was too young to carry out this desire, he felt that he must begin to lead some such life at home as he hoped to follow in later years. Every comfort which he could give up without making much show of it, was put away from him now—there should be no more fires in his room, for religious had none in their cells, and though his bed could not be changed unobserved, he made it hard with pieces of wood and other things. At his meals he would choose the food he liked least,

or which was the least rare, and in the middle of the cold nights of winter, he would rise to prayer, and become so full of love and devotion, that he scarcely knew his body was chilled and shivering from the exposure.

A change came in the outward life of the Saint then, for his parents went to join the court of Spain, by the King's invitation, and Louis with his younger brother and sister accompanied them. During the voyage, they landed at some of the ports on the way, and at one of them Louis, who was wandering on the beach, picked up a stone of a blood-red tint, which appeared to him to represent the five wounds of Jesus, and which he considered God had put in his way on purpose to give him a greater devotion to the Passion of our Lord. After that, he was more than ever resolved upon giving his life entirely to God in a religious house, and during his stay in the Spanish court, he saw a good deal of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, which led him to desire to become one of them. His mother had long

been told of his hopes and wishes, but both of them knew that the Marquis would be very angry even at the idea of his eldest son giving up his place in the world, and that it would be almost impossible to gain his consent.

Louis prayed and did penance, and at length he received such a clear knowledge of God's Will, that he had no more doubt as to what he ought to do, and he at once spoke to his confessor, begging him to ask the Jesuit Fathers to receive him. Hard and difficult as his way would be in gaining his desire, the Saint was never one who would shrink back from what cost him any suffering, and the same day he told his mother all, and obtained her promise to mention the subject to his father. The Marquis was furious with anger, but deciding to treat it as a boyish folly, he did not speak to Louis for a few days, therefore the youth himself sought an interview, in which he told his father, humbly but firmly, of his resolution to obey the voice of God. His words were received with most violent reproaches ; his father drove

him from his presence, threatening to have him caned by his servants, but Louis only replied : " Would that God allowed me to suffer such treatment for the love of Him!" and went away with perfect meekness.

The Marquis could not long be angry with his son, so he turned his displeasure upon his confessor, and next he accused the Fathers of the Society of trying to rob him of Louis ; then he arranged to return with his family to their own home in Italy. It was a great disappointment to the Saint, but he obeyed his father, and prepared for the journey, during which he was to visit several of the Italian courts, and be thrown amongst the world he had renounced. Once back at Castiglione, Louis found a cave upon his father's estate, where he might enjoy the peace and retirement for which he longed, and to this place he had his bed and books removed, and gave himself up to prayer and penance, but the Marquis heard of this retreat, and ordered him to remain in his own room, with many harsh words and

angry threats. Louis obeyed ; and closing the door, knelt before the crucifix, shedding many tears, and begged God to appear for him, whilst his father's conscience began to accuse him of his severity to so holy a son. So he sent an attendant to see what the lad was about, who beheld through a crack in the door his young master weeping before the image of his crucified Master, whilst he scourged himself severely. The man burst into tears, and returned to tell the Marquis what he had seen, and he insisted on being taken from his bed, where he was confined by illness, and placed in a large arm-chair, which was wheeled to the door of his son's room. There he also heard the cruel blows which Louis was inflicting on himself—his heart melted, and causing the chair to be pushed into the room, he exclaimed : “ My son, you have conquered at last.” It was true that the Saint's patience and suffering had won the victory, but there were still to be more trials and more difficulties before he could brave the world. The consent of the Emperor

had to be gained to his giving up his property to Ridolfo ; his father was to try his courage by appealing to his loving nature as a means of getting him to renounce the thought of a religious life, but Louis prayed on that God would remove all hindrances from his path, and at length, after long delay, the Marquis consented to part with him, and bid him go with his blessing, to the life to which God called him. The news soon spread through the castle and through the town ; men, women, and children mourned to lose their young lord, and begged him not to forsake them, but Louis remained firm in his desire to give up the world for the service of God, and lost no time in taking leave of his home and friends, to present himself in Rome to the General of the Company of Jesus.

It was on the Feast of the Presentation of our Lady, that Louis—now Brother Aloysius—offered his soul to the entire service of God, and was received as a son by the new Father he had chosen, and on the 25th of November

he entered the house as a novice, when he renewed again the promise he had so often made to God, asking for grace to live and die in the Society he had chosen. The Saint always kept that anniversary with great devotion, choosing S. Catherine as his special patron, on account of her festival being celebrated on that day. Now we see Aloysius in the state he had longed for, doing every duty with cheerful joy, obeying his master with never-failing sweetness and humility, practising the rules of his Order with great exactness, and thus he passed through his two years' trial as a perfect novice, and was allowed to make his profession.

He had always loved humility, but now he sought humiliations with increasing eagerness, and delighted in being sent out to beg, with a sack on his shoulders, through the streets of Rome, to wash plates and dishes in the kitchen, and collect scraps to give to the poor who waited at the door. It was not unusual for the members of the Society to do such things, but they were striking in Aloysius, because of

the delight which was seen upon his face when he performed them. But his health became more delicate, and God, Who had made him holy in his youth, was quickly preparing him for the glory of heaven. In the year 1591 a terrible fever raged throughout Italy, and in Rome the deaths were so many, that the Jesuits opened an hospital of their own, and the General himself attended upon the sick. Aloysius was one of the foremost in his charity to the fever-stricken poor, undressing and placing them in bed, washing them, and bringing them food with the greatest readiness. Several of his companions died, yet the infection did not seem to touch the Saint, but later he caught the terrible complaint through carrying a poor creature whom he found in the street to the hospital. On the seventh day of his illness his end seemed so near, that he received the last Sacraments, but he lived still a few weeks longer, to die not so much from the fever as the exhaustion which came after it. During his sickness his love of penance still appeared

strong ; he would sip his bitter medicine slowly, so as to mortify himself more, and by trifling sacrifices proved how great a perfection he had reached.

In spite of his weakness, he would ask for his clothes, and drag himself to a table on which a crucifix was standing, which he would take in his hands and kiss reverently, also the picture of S. Catherine, which was hanging on the wall. Once in prayer it was made known to Aloysius the exact day upon which he should die, and he was full of joy, because he longed so much to be with God. "Have you heard the good news?" he said to one of the Fathers. "I am to die in a week's time. Pray say the *Te Deum* with me in thanksgiving to God."

During the few days which yet remained, he asked that a crucifix might be placed on a table near his bed, whilst the seven Penitential Psalms were read to him ; or else he would beg to hear some passages from his favourite spiritual books. He spoke of his death as

simply as people speak of going out of their dwelling, and often said softly to himself, "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ," whilst his only pain seemed to be lest the food he was ordered to take might delay the time he longed for so much.

On the last day of the Octave of Corpus Christi, when he had said he should die, the brothers who nursed him thought him better and stronger than usual, but Aloysius replied smilingly, "I shall die to-day." He begged to receive the Body and Blood of his Lord as Viaticum, but the Infirmarian could not believe it was necessary; however, as the afternoon passed, he begged so earnestly for this grace, that the Father Rector brought it to him in the presence of all the company. Then the saintly youth took leave of all in turn, whilst they wept bitterly at the thought of losing him. When the room was quiet again, Aloysius seemed to remain in continual prayer, the Fathers giving him from time to time holy water, or a crucifix to kiss, as he murmured the Name of Jesus.

At last with his eyes fixed on the image of the dying Saviour, and a blessed candle in his hand, he yielded up his spirit into the hands of the God he had loved and served so faithfully, in the middle of the night between the 20th and 21st of June, thus gaining the favour he had long desired, of dying within the Octave of Corpus Christi, and upon a Friday. When the news spread, no one thought of the pure soul without the certainty that it was in heaven. Everything that could be obtained was taken for a precious relic, and after the body was removed to the church of the Annunziata, many of the students knelt praying every day around his tomb. Although Aloysius had striven to hide himself from the knowledge of the world, it was God's Will that his wonderful sanctity should be made known to men, so that he may stand as a model of purity and perfection for every child of the Holy Catholic Church. We may not be asked to take up the practices of Aloysius—such marvellous gifts of grace will probably never be ours—still each in our own

path is called to aim high, to strive for the humility, purity, and charity which this young Saint put before himself as the virtues which shone so brightly in Jesus and Mary, so that we, too, may enjoy the possession of God in heaven, and receive an unfading crown.



A GREAT DOCTOR

S. THOMAS AQUINAS

A.D. 1274



HE last words which this great Saint spoke to those around his bed, seem to give us the secret of his life of singular holiness and fidelity from its earliest commencement to its close: "Be assured that he who shall always walk faithfully in God's presence, always ready to give Him an account of all his actions, shall never be separated from Him by consenting to sin."

In that constant recollection had S. Thomas been dwelling from the day when, as a little child of five years, he was placed under the monks of Monte Cassino; and they saw with

surprise and joy that the impatience, anger, and other ordinary faults of children had no place in him, that God's grace seemed to fill his heart, and that his natural talent was even surpassed by his disposition towards piety and virtue.

Of illustrious family, his parents desired that he should prize nobility of birth far less than holiness of life, and thus they placed him with those who should best instil the love and knowledge of God into his heart.

When S. Thomas was ten years old, the Abbot of Monte Cassino advised his father to send him for further study to some university, but first of all the Count took him to stay awhile with his mother at their home near Loretto.

Here the boy was both the wonder and the admiration of the household, for though there was much company, and his life was so different to what he had been accustomed, he seemed as recollected as if he were still dwelling in the monastery, speaking as little as

possible, and spending his time in prayer or serious reading. It was his happiness too to seek out the poor and needy, and give them help; for this purpose he distributed his own meals among the hungry, until his father heard of it and allowed him to dispense alms at the gate to all who applied for aid, which permission caused Thomas the greatest joy. The Countess, seeing how pure and innocent was the mind of her little son, feared the risk of placing him in a college lest he might be led astray by evil influence, but her husband was resolved on sending him to Naples, where a university had lately been opened. In the midst of danger this holy child seems to have kept himself spotless, shunning all whom he perceived were not virtuous, and praying earnestly to God to preserve him from evil. As he grew up towards manhood, he shunned those amusements which so frequently harm the soul, and spent his leisure in the quiet of his chamber, praying and meditating on holy things. His chief

friend was a very holy priest of the Order of S. Dominic, and his words so inflamed the heart of S. Thomas with an increasing love of God, that he conceived a desire to give himself wholly to the Divine service in that Order.

When the Count, his father, was told of this desire, he refused to agree to it, but the Saint being assured that it was God's call, knew that it must be obeyed, even before the voice of an earthly parent, and therefore at his earnest entreaty he received the Dominican habit at Naples, in 1243, when he was about seventeen years old.

The Countess Theodora sent a messenger to urge him to give up such a state of life, and set out to visit him for the same purpose, whereupon S. Thomas begged his Superiors to remove him. They did so, sending him first to Rome, and afterwards to Paris; but two of his brothers who were commanders in the enemy's guard, seized him on the road near Acqua-pendente, and after striving vainly

to pull off his habit, took him to Rocca-Secca, the seat of his father. The Countess now used persuasions and tears to turn her son from his desire for the life of a religious, but he remained firm and unshaken, so that growing angry, she ordered him to be closely confined, and allowed him to see no one but his two sisters.

This solitude was very welcome to the Saint, for it gave him time for prayer; but it was interrupted by the arrival of his brothers, who shut him up in a tower of the castle, tore his habit into shreds, and even sent a wicked person to him to try and tempt him to sin. Snatching up a burning brand from the fire, S. Thomas drove this creature from his presence, and then kneeling in prayer thanked God for helping him, and begged grace ever to remain faithful to his vow of entire purity and self-consecration. It was then that, falling into a sleep, he was visited by two angels, who seemed to gird him so tightly round the waist with a cord that the pressure awoke

him ; but this favour from Heaven he carefully concealed for some thirty years, and then in telling it to his confessor, added that from that time he had never felt tempted by any impure thought or imagination.

For a year or more, S. Thomas suffered this cruelty at the hands of his friends, and then they began to relent, seeing his great patience.

The Dominicans of Naples being told that his mother was willing to help her holy son to escape, went to Rocca-Secca, where Thomas was let down from the tower in a strong basket, and so accompanied them back to his brethren, who received him joyfully.

A year from this time he made his profession there; but his mother renewed her complaints to Pope Innocent IV., and he sent for S. Thomas, in order to examine him as to whether his was a true vocation, and finding every sign that God had called him to His immediate service, the disputed question was set at rest by the Pope's entire approbation.

S. Thomas now went from Rome to Paris,

and afterwards to Cologne, where he continued his studies, but so concealing his progress and his talents, through motives of humility, that his companions mockingly called him "the dumb ox." However, his brilliant powers of intellect could not long remain undiscovered, especially by his masters; but applause and admiration had no ill effect upon S. Thomas, who was already so well-grounded in the virtue of humility. One day when it was his business to read at table, the corrector by mistake told him to read a word wrongly, and S. Thomas obeyed, though he was aware of the error. When others spoke of it, and said he had been foolish to admit the correction, the Saint answered: "It matters not how a word is pronounced, but to practise on all occasions humility and obedience is of the greatest importance."

In the year 1248, S. Thomas was appointed to teach at Cologne, and he then commenced publishing his first work. It was then, also, that he began with increased prayer and holy mor-

tification to prepare himself for the priesthood.

The devotion of S. Thomas to the Blessed Sacrament was of no ordinary kind ; long did he kneel before it in the day, long hours also were given in prayer in that Divine Presence during the hours of the night, and the love there enkindled shone in his every look and word.

In October, 1257, the Saint was made Doctor of Divinity, and a year later was called upon to give his judgment in a question of great importance, about which the opinion of the professors of the Paris University was divided. Before giving utterance to any decision, the young doctor applied himself to prayer, and then writing his treatise carried it to the church, and laying it upon the altar offered it thus to God.

S. Louis, the holy King of France, had a deep respect for S. Thomas, and frequently sought his counsel even in matters concerning the state.

In 1261, Pope Urban IV. summoned the Saint to Rome, where he taught and preached as he also did in Naples, Bologna, Viterbo, and many other cities. There were two Rabbins of the Jewish Church who had held a lengthy conference with S. Thomas, and remained obstinate in their unbelief, but agreed to resume the discussion upon the coming day.

After leaving them, the Saint repaired to the foot of the altar, and there prayed during the entire night for their conversion; and in the morning the Rabbins sought him, begging to be baptised Christians, while many others followed their example.

In the year 1263, the general chapter of the Doninicans was held in London, and S. Thomas being present, soon afterwards obtained permission to relinquish his teaching, and thus be more able to live a retired life. Many ecclesiastical preferments were offered him, but never could he be prevailed to accept of any.

For several months before his death, S. Thomas laid aside his writings and fixed his whole mind on God, and thoughts of the life to come.

A general council had been convoked by Pope Gregory X., and having been directed to repair to it the Saint set out for Naples, though very much out of health.

This was at the close of the month of January, in 1274, and he had for his companion his friend Father Reynold of Piperno. On his way S. Thomas rested at the Castle of Magenza, the residence of his niece; but here his illness increased, and he felt sure that his end was not far distant.

However, this conviction in nowise hindered him from continuing his journey until an increase of fever compelled him to stop at the Cistercian Abbey of Fossa-Nuova. Here, he went at once before the Blessed Sacrament, and began to pray with great fervour; and passing thence into the cloister he was lodged in the Abbot's cell, and lay there for nearly a month.

During his illness he was continually speaking of eternity and his longing for God's presence, saying in the words of Augustine: "Then shall I truly live, when I shall be quite filled with Thee and Thy love. Now am I a burden to myself, because I am not entirely filled with Thee."

Having made a general confession of his whole life to Father Reynold, he asked for Viaticum, and while awaiting it begged to be laid on the floor upon ashes. When he saw the Sacred Host in the hand of the priest, he made aloud a profession of faith in the Real Presence, and all other tenets of the Roman Church; then, with loving adoration, received his Lord, and remained on the ashes while making his thanksgiving.

As he grew rapidly weaker, he now received Extreme Unction, and after thanking the Abbot and monks of Fossa-Nuova for their charity to him, he began to pray, and a little after midnight, it being the 7th of March, 1274, he departed this life, being then forty-

eight years of age. A vast concourse of people assembled at the funeral of the Saint, and several persons were cured by his intercession, and by his relics. Many universities, princes, and religious Orders, begged to have the remains of S. Thomas entrusted to their keeping, and at length Pope Urban V. decided that it should be given to the Dominicans, to carry to Paris or to Toulouse. They decided on removing it to the last-named city, where it rests in a rich shrine in the Dominican church there.

The Saint was solemnly canonised in the year 1323, and in 1567 Pope Pius V. decreed that his festival should be kept with the same honour paid to the festivals of the four doctors of the Western Church. One very beautiful story is told of the desire of S. Thomas for God, and God alone. At Naples, while busied with the writing which made his name so eminent, he was seen one day raised from the ground in ecstasy while he prayed, and a voice from the crucifix said to him: "Thomas, thou hast

well written of Me; what recompense dost thou desire?"

The Saint answered: "No other than Thyself, O Lord."


The hymn of S. Thomas Aquinas is well-known to all of us, "Adoro te devoto," breathing the spirit of faith and love in the Blessed Sacrament; that "thirst" after Jesus was satisfied indeed, when the Saint entered into the unspeakable glory of heaven, and it was his happiness to see his Lord, no longer veiled under the appearance of bread and wine, but radiant and beautiful as the light of the celestial city, which—because He is there—"hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it."

* * * * *

"Jesus! whom for the present veil'd I see
What I so thirst for, oh vouchsafe to me
That I may see Thy countenance unfolding,
And may be blest Thy glory in beholding."

GENTLE AND LOVING TO ALL

S. FRANCIS OF SALES

T the Castle of Sales, near Annecy, about three hundred years ago, the holy countess of the noble family who dwelt there was praying fervently to God that the little child which He was soon to give her, might be very good, and that it might die rather than grow up to become His enemy.

Her prayers were heard; for the little boy, Francis, showed, from his earliest infancy, an unusual sweetness of disposition, loving God as soon as he began to know Him. The first words he uttered distinctly were these: "God and my mother love me well." And this realization of the infinite charity of God grew with his

growth, and resulted in that spirit of sweetness and charity to others, for the love of Jesus, which distinguished his character as a man.

The good countess who had prayed so much for the little unborn child, prayed more now as she saw his innocence and holiness, entreating God to keep him pure and unspotted from the world, and she delighted to witness his pleasure in reading holy books, his unwearying happiness when in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and the love to the poor and the self-denial he would practise to assist them. Francis was also a clever child, and apt to learn; and when he began to study at the College of Annecy, he made rapid progress; still this love of learning never interfered with his service of God, and as early as twelve years of age his heart was so fixed upon the hope of becoming a priest, that, with the consent of his father, he received the tonsure.

A few years later, the parents of Francis

sent him to Paris, where he went through a course of theological instruction under the Jesuits, and during this time he acquired that intimate knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures which distinguished him. He still frequented the churches constantly, and was never seen about in the city for amusement—only in going to and from college or church. S. Etienne-des-Grès was the favourite resort, because it was so retired ; and there, before an image of the Blessed Virgin, he made a vow of belonging only to her and her divine Son as long as life should last.

At about sixteen years of age it pleased God to let this Saint be very much tempted to despair of salvation, and this idea made him so unhappy, that he grew quite ill, but could not be persuaded to tell any one the cause of his distress. This miserable thought remained with him a whole month, during which he wept bitterly by night and by day ; but at last the Holy Spirit put it into his heart to go to his favourite church, and, kneeling before

the figure of the Blessed Virgin—where he had made his vow—he begged her to pray that, even if he was so wretched as to be doomed to separation from God for eternity, he might at least love and serve Him all his life on earth. With many tears he recited the “Memorare,” but no sooner had he finished this prayer, than in an instant the temptation of the evil one left him, and his soul was once more filled with peace and joy. No doubt this month of trial and misery was permitted to happen to Francis because God, Who knows all the future, knew that he would in after-years be a great director of souls, and it would guide him in helping any who were greatly tempted, if he had first passed through the same difficulties.

After staying a long time in Paris, his father sent Francis to Padua, and it was there he planned a rule of life for himself, which has been preserved carefully up to the present time, and has been a help to many other young people,—directing them how to arm

themselves against the temptations of the world, by the habit of living in the presence of God. From Padua he went to Rome, and from there to Loretto, where he renewed his vow made under the protection of Mary, and then returned home to the Castle of Sales, where he was received with every mark of joy.

The father of Francis had formed many plans for his son's worldly success, and had obtained for him a post which would have won him much public esteem; but the Saint steadily refused all these offers, and declared his unchanged intention of giving himself to God's service.

Just at first, his father raised difficulties, but they all were cleared away by the hand of God, and Francis was made Provost of the Cathedral at Annecy, where he began to preach with so much fervour that thousands of souls were converted to God. His next mission was to try, by the command of his bishop, to restore the Catholic Faith in that part of the

country, near the Lake of Geneva, which was full of heresy; and here he toiled some years, encountering hatred and persecution—even risking his life among the bitter enemies of Christ, and yet bringing many souls to a knowledge and love of the truth. It was his great gentleness and sweetness of manner which won so many hearts and gained so many victories for God, and we are told that he never left the pulpit without being followed by multitudes of people—some wishing to confess their sins and be reconciled to God, others seeking to be instructed in religious things.

Upon the death of the Bishop of Geneva Francis succeeded him in that dignity, and, in order to prepare himself for his new duties, he made a long retreat, during which he formed a new rule for his future life.

One of the greatest works of S. Francis of Sales was the guidance of S. Jane Frances de Chantal, so as to fit her for the place God had assigned to her in this world, as a religious of

the Order of the Visitation, and to lead her up in spiritual things, to the perfection which she attained, and which won her crown in heaven.

When this good bishop first knew Madame de Chantal, she had been suffering much from the loss of her husband, and was sad and troubled; but he soon helped her to seek comfort from God, and her heart found peace and rest, though the brightness of earthly hope and joy was over.

Her little children were very fond of S. Francis, and would run with arms outstretched to meet him, and cluster round his chair, answering his questions and listening to his words. As the girls grew older and showed many little faults of vanity, Francis never failed to rebuke them, but it was always with gentle kindness, which made them reverence him more than ever, and won their confidence entirely.

At one time, Françoise de Chantal seemed

in great danger of becoming engrossed with the world, but the holy bishop begged her to make him one simple promise—to say a “Hail Mary” every day, *with all her heart*; and, because it was his request, she gave her word never to omit this one prayer, and the Blessed Virgin kept her from harm.

S. Francis spent a great deal of time in drawing up the rules for the Order of the Visitation, and in visiting and instructing Mother de Chantal and her nuns, so that many people said, scornfully, that “the Bishop of Geneva wasted time with a few simple women;” but he heard such speeches without being influenced by them, and continued with his usual sweetness to give both care and thought to the guidance of those nuns who were chosen by God for the purpose of establishing an order which has been such a glory and blessing to the whole Catholic world.

Thus the good bishop’s life passed in zealous work for his divine Master; he preached eloquent sermons, he wrote innumerable letters

of sweetness and wisdom to all who needed his counsel, he heard confessions and received those who went to seek help or teaching. But it was not for Francis to live to an advanced age, and in the year 1622 he became seriously ill. He was then in attendance upon the court of Savoy, at Lyons, where, instead of staying in the luxurious apartments prepared for him, he insisted on lodging in a little cottage belonging to the gardener of one of the monasteries of the Visitation.

He preached and performed his usual duties during some days of pain, and then was obliged to take to his bed. In those days, severe remedies were used by surgeons, and hot irons were applied behind his neck, and caustic to his head, which gave him intense suffering; but though the tears were forced from his eyes by the agony he endured, his soul was steadfastly fixed upon God, in complete resignation, and, instead of complaints, none but the holy words of Scripture fell from his lips. Many times he exclaimed, "Wash me, O Lord, from

my iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin ;" for in his humility he believed he deserved these and far worse pains.

After receiving the last Sacraments on the evening of the Feast of the Holy Innocents, S. Francis passed away from earth to heaven, being then not quite fifty-five years old, and he was buried near the high altar in the church of the Visitation convent at Annecy, amidst the tears and lamentations of the people who had known and loved him so truly.

In closing this Life, we must seek to learn the lessons it teaches us. The sweet gentleness and love of S. Francis of Sales, is the thought which always comes with the mention of his name, but we must not suppose it was a purely natural sweetness which required no effort, no struggle against self. The Saint has himself said that he was especially tempted to anger, that he often felt it very hard and difficult to control impatient words and thoughts, but yet he conquered with God's grace, and

the same means of grace are open to each one of us if we will but seek them constantly and use them well. We might all be saints, if we were not so weak, so ungenerous, so sadly unfaithful. We might all conquer our love of ease, our love of pleasure, our vanity, our pride—or whatever may be our special fault and temptation—if we would but strive as those holy servants of God did, if we felt the same mistrust of self and confidence in our dear Lord which kept them safe. But we will not do these things : we tire of the struggle and the self-denial, and thus we remain full of sins and imperfections, which grieve God and hold us back from getting the grace He wants to give us. So, as we close our “Stories of the Saints,” we must turn with fresh hope and courage to Him they served, asking for love—that love which will make us press forward on the way to heaven, and count everything worthless which will not lead us there.

“O God, by Whose gracious Will the blessed

Francis, Thy Confessor and Bishop, became all things to all men for the saving of their souls, mercifully grant that, being filled with the sweetness of Thy love, we may, through the guidance of his counsels and by the aid of his merits, attain unto the joys of the life everlasting. Amen."



THE SAINT OF THE ROSARY

S. DOMINIC



HERE was a Saint who drew all men to him by the charm of his courteous manner, and by his tenderness for suffering in others; one who hated sin yet loved sinners, spending his life and strength in preaching the word of God; and this was Dominic Gusman, the founder of the order of Friars Preachers, who was born in Spain during the year 1170. His was a saintly family, so that from his cradle he was trained to holiness by his mother, who before his birth had received a strange vision which foretold the future greatness of her son. At seven years of age he was put under the care of his uncle, who was a priest, and the little Dominic

grew up close to the altar, loving nothing so well as his prayers and hymns and the serving holy Mass.

At fourteen he was sent to the University of Palencia, and while he remained there, he was not only diligent in study, but also distinguished by the purity of his life. It seemed as if no worldly matter could give him pleasure, because his heart was quite set upon spiritual things, and though but a boy, those who spoke to him always felt the better for his words, which were full of the love of God. At the commencement of his college days, Dominic made a rule to abstain entirely from wine, and during the ten years he stayed at Palencia, no example or persuasion led him to be unfaithful in this point.

Very little is known of the Saint during the first twenty years of his life, excepting one or two examples of his tender, unselfish nature. A dreadful famine prevailed in Spain, during which Dominic not only sold all his clothing to get food for the poor, but even parted with

his precious books, so that he might give more to the starving people whose misery touched his heart. "Would you have me study those parchments when men are dying with hunger?" he said to one who was surprised at this act and then the others were roused to try also to assist in the pressing need of those around them.

Again we find Dominic offering himself to be sold as a ransom for the son of a poor woman who had been captured by the Moors, which shows us his generous character, although his proposal was not allowed to be carried out.

At twenty-five years old Dominic became a priest, receiving the habit of the Canons Regular at Osma. For nine years he stayed there, giving himself continually to prayer—his one petition that he might receive the gift of true charity, and he determined, so soon as it was possible, to found an Order on purpose to preach the faith.

The state of the Church was most unhappy

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just at that period; heathens were fighting against Christians, and heresy was making itself known, and during a journey to Denmark, Dominic and his companion, Diego, saw so much work to be done for God in the world, that their hearts burned within them to become true apostles for the faith. On their homeward road they rested at Montpellier, just at a time when an assembly of Catholics had met there to think and pray over the best means of checking the heresy which was springing up everywhere, and Dominic and Diego were invited to join them in their meetings. Diego asked many questions, and found that the heretics got their power over men by their preaching and persuasive manners, and a great outward show of poverty and austerity. Then the Holy Spirit of God inspired him, and he proposed that all the priests should dismiss their attendants and horses, and keeping no appearance of worldly power, go as simple missionaries amongst the people. They agreed, and Diego was made the head of the little com-

pany, who went about on foot through the towns and villages, trusting to God to provide for their daily wants, while they taught and preached as they journeyed.

At first Dominic was little thought of, for he had only taken the part of a subject, but his usefulness was found out in the disputes with the heretics, and he persuaded so many to return to the Church that those who still kept to their errors hated him as their worst enemy, even plotting to take his life. Finding that Catholic children were exposed to the danger of being educated by those who had forsaken their faith, Dominic resolved to find some way of preventing this, and choosing a small village at the foot of the Pyrenees, called Prouille, he founded a house, where, under the care of a few pious women, these children could be trained in the knowledge and love of God. This was the beginning of an Order which was to flourish all over the world in later times, but then it had only nine or ten members, who had been converted by the

preaching of Dominic. They wore a white habit and dark mantle, and besides giving a certain time to educating the children, they were to spend some hours in spinning and other work.

After this time Diego returned to Spain, to visit his own church and people, but his promise of returning to labour in France was never fulfilled, for he died in his own country, so that Dominic lost his friend and companion. The missionaries dispersed, one to one country, another to another, but Dominic remained at the post where God had placed him, although he was alone. During ten years he preached the faith in the different provinces of France, with very few to help him, bearing for the sake of Christ countless sufferings and sorrows, working miracles amongst the people for whom he laboured, and winning many hearts to the love of God.

But oftentimes the inhabitants of those places where he stayed, turned against him and threatened his life; still oftener they

shouted after him as he passed bare-footed along their streets, throwing dirt at him, and tying straws to his coat and hat, and through all this Dominic went cheerfully about, rejoicing that he was allowed to follow in the footsteps of his Master.

Once the Saint had come to the bank of the river Garonne, when about forty English pilgrims arrived on their way to the shrine of S. James of Compostella. They took a boat to cross to the other side, but being small it sank with them to the bottom of the river. Dominic was praying at the time in a small church near, and being alarmed by the cries of the sinking crew, he left his devotions, but when he came to the bank of the river not one of the pilgrims could be seen.

Full of faith in the power of God, the holy man knelt in prayer, then rising up cried :—

“ I command you in the Name of Christ to come alive and unhurt to the shore.”

Immediately the bodies rose to the surface of

the water, and safely reached the bank, praising and thanking God and S. Dominic.

Many miracles of a similar kind were worked by the Saint, which began to be known and spoken of amongst the people, and helped on the attention which was given to his preaching; but it was his singular holiness of life, his austere rule—and yet his constant cheerfulness—which gained him the most influence over the hearts of others.

And yet, in spite of all his labour, Dominic was not succeeding as he desired, so he began to entreat the help of the Blessed Mother of God, that it might be told him in what way he could best destroy the heresy of the people.

Mary herself appeared to her faithful client, and told him to teach the devotion of the Rosary, so Dominic took his stand at the market-place or in the principal streets, drawing men, women, and little children to listen as he put before them this beautiful way of prayer, explaining each mystery in a plain and

simple manner. However, for some time Dominic's work was hindered by the wars which prevailed, but afterwards two rich townsmen of Toulouse gave him a house, where others came to join him in his way of life, and the number gradually increased, keeping a rule of religious discipline.

The Saint travelled to Rome to obtain the Pope's protection for his little community, and while staying there, he had a vision, in which he saw two men whom the Blessed Virgin was offering to God to stay His anger against the sins of the world. One of the men he saw to be himself, but the other was not known to him; yet the very next morning when he was in the church praying, he saw the stranger of his vision dressed like a beggar, and running to him, Dominic embraced him with tears of joy, asking him to be his friend and join with him in labouring for God. From that time S. Francis (for he it was) and S. Dominic had a warm attachment to each other, and each in his own path fulfilled the work assigned to

him by God, whilst love to the Lord Jesus Christ bound their hearts together.

When Dominic returned to France he continued to teach and preach in the world. His community was growing quickly, and he ruled them well, sending them out in their turn as apostles amongst men. God was pleased to give many signs of the favour He had towards His servant, by supernatural favours and miracles. Once when some men were engaged at work at the convent, a mason was buried by a mass of earth falling on him, but S. Dominic ordered him to be dug out whilst he prayed, and when the rubbish was removed, the man rose alive and perfectly unhurt. Not long afterwards, a widow lady went to the church to hear the Saint preach, leaving her only son seriously ill, and on her return home he was dead. Bidding her servants carry after her the lifeless body, she went to Dominic, knelt at his feet, and in silence laid her dead son before him. Her sobs touched the compassionate heart of the holy man. For a few

moments he turned aside and prayed, then coming back he made the sign of the cross over the boy, took him by the hand, and gave him back to his mother alive and well.

The story spread quickly, and Dominic was so pained by the public honour he received, that he would have flown from France had not the Pope commanded him to remain. Many such incidents might be told, but there is one without naming which no life of this Saint would be complete. The friars were about a hundred in number when, on a certain day, the holy Dominic bid two of the brothers go into the city to beg. They obeyed, but received nothing for some hours, so that they returned to the convent, and were nearly there when they met a woman who revered the Order very much, and in her pity, because they had taken nothing, she gave them one loaf. As they went on their way they met a man who begged hard of them and persisted, in spite of their excuses; then they said to each other, "We will give him our loaf for the love of

God." He immediately disappeared, and they came to the convent where Dominic (to whom God had revealed all) met them and said, with a joyous air, "My sons, have you nothing?" They told him what had happened, and how they gave their only loaf to a poor beggar.

"It was an angel of God," said the Saint. "The Lord will provide for us; we will go and pray." Then he entered the church for a little time, coming out to bid the brothers call the rest to the refectory.

"But, father, why should we call them when there is nothing to eat?" and they delayed assembling the community.

Then the holy father commanded once more that all should repair to dinner; he gave the benediction, and one of the brothers began to read. Meantime Dominic joined his hands on the table, remaining in prayer, and suddenly two young men appeared in the middle of the refectory, carrying loaves in two white cloths which hung from their shoulders before and behind, and they began to distribute the bread,

beginning at the lower rows, placing a loaf before each brother. When they had reached the Blessed Dominic and placed a loaf before him, they bowed and disappeared without any one knowing how they went.

The Saint then said:—

“My sons, eat the bread which the Lord has sent you.” And bidding those who served go to the empty vessel which was used for wine, they found it miraculously filled up to the brim.

They ate and drank as much as they needed for that and the two next days, and then Dominic ordered what remained to be distributed amongst the poor, and gave the brothers a beautiful address, bidding them never to mistrust the power of God, however great might be their want.

Everything about the Saint showed how he loved poverty—his habit, his girdle, and all that he wore. He would not have any cell of his own, but slept in the church, leaning against the altar-steps or lying on the stones. His penances were

severe—many for himself, many for obstinate sinners, many for the souls in purgatory—and his prayer was constant, for there was no place or time in which he did not turn his heart and mind to God.

Time passed on, and this holy, useful life was drawing to a close. He would say to his brothers:—"You see me now in health, but before the next Feast of the Assumption I shall be with God;" but he did not lessen his labours, for after he received an intimation from Heaven that his end was near, he started from Bologna upon his last mission. When he returned, there was a great change in him, and the excessive heat tried him much, yet his zeal appeared to increase, as if he desired his Lord to find him at work when his summons came. It was the 6th of August when he re-entered his convent on foot, and going to the church, spent his usual time in prayer; but at its conclusion he was so evidently ill that he desired to be laid on a sack—stretched upon the ground, and had the

novices called round him that he might speak to them. His friars were in the deepest sorrow, and begged him to pray for them. The dying Saint said in a clear voice, with his eyes raised to heaven :—

“Holy Father, I commend those whom Thou hast given me to Thee. Do Thou keep them, do Thou preserve them.”

He then insisted upon being laid on ashes on the floor, and all the brethren being assembled, he gave them his last counsels, and begging them above all to have charity, to preserve humility, and make poverty their possession, he stretched out his arms toward heaven and died, being nearly fifty-one years of age.

Thus ended the life which had been devoted to the work of God with so much courage and generosity ; and the divine blessing which Dominic asked for his children when he lay upon his death-bed, has followed them in all times and places, for the once small company has become the great teaching Order of the

Church, treading in the footsteps of their holy founder, and striving to maintain the spirit of charity, poverty, and humility which burned so brightly in him.



A GREAT MISSIONARY

S. FRANCIS XAVIER



ONE of the best-known, best-loved names among the fellow-students and followers of Ignatius Loyola is Francis Xavier, whom Almighty God chose to renew in his own life many of the wonders and labours of the lives of the first apostles, and gave that attractive manner, that energy, and powerful mind which were necessary for him fully to carry out the divine purpose in his creation.

His pious parents had implanted in his little heart a great fear of offending God, and a remarkable modesty of manner which preserved his childish days from sin; and, as he grew older, his strong desire for learning caused him

to turn his whole mind to study rather than to follow the taste for military life which his brothers possessed. His progress in education was so rapid, that he was early sent to the University at Paris; and there he gained many honours, and at twenty-two years of age was teaching philosophy in the schools.

God was not then his great, his only end. The glory his talents had won, the flattery with which he was surrounded, had done their work, and his thoughts were full of the position he had already attained, and the still higher place he beheld awaiting him in the future. But God's way was not his. The time was coming when he would awake to see his true life-work, and just when he was enjoying the place he had gained by his abilities, S. Ignatius, who had left home, and friends, and fortune, came to France. The founder of the Company of Jesus soon heard of Francis Xavier, and believing that God had great purposes for him, Ignatius resolved to win him to use his gifts for a nobler and higher end than worldly approbation.

“What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?” Over and over again Xavier heard those words from the lips of his new friend, but it was not easy to relinquish his ambitious desires, and become forgotten and despised, for the love of Christ. At length Francis declared his intention of thinking seriously about the affairs of his soul, and for this purpose gave himself up to the directions of Ignatius, and during the retreat which this great spiritual teacher gave him, the love of God penetrated the long-closed heart, and Francis Xavier came from his retirement a changed man, his only ambition to bear the cross and give his life for the glory of his Creator and the good of his fellow-men.

One of the seven who made their vows in the chapel of Montmartre, he accompanied Ignatius to Rome, and there had an audience from Pope Paul III., who encouraged him to go generously along the path which opened before him. The King of Portugal had made a

request that some of the fathers of the new society might be sent as missionaries to his possessions in the Indies, and although S. Ignatius could only spare two from his followers, one of these was Francis Xavier.

Their route to Lisbon took them within a short distance of the home of his parents, yet Francis refused the ambassador's permission to visit them, so that his soul might not be hindered by renewing ties which he had put from him for the service of God. This mission to the Indies was not entirely a surprise to Francis, for once, in a dream, he had seen the miserable darkness of those heathen souls, as if his own lot was cast among them, with great toils, and cares, and sufferings to undergo; therefore, when he was chosen for this mission, he felt that God had forewarned him of what was to come.

On his arrival at Lisbon Xavier was invited to make his stay at the court, but he would lodge nowhere save at the hospital, and lived on alms which he collected himself. However,

he won so much esteem and affection during his stay, that the king began to think of keeping him there, instead of allowing him to proceed to the Indies. Francis set sail from Lisbon at last upon the 7th April, 1541, which was his thirty-fifth birthday, on his voyage to Goa, in Hindostan. He carried with him letters from the Pope, giving him the power to teach and preach throughout the East, but he refused to take with him any attendants, although he was urged to do so. The voyage was one so much dreaded that passengers usually took a winding-sheet with them, in case of death, so that their bodies might be buried in the sea with some Christian decency. The ships were in those days only despatched once a year, and were then crowded with merchants, soldiers, and travellers of every kind. However, fortunately for Francis Xavier, the company he met with seemed unusually quiet and respectable.

Yet it was a strange life for one who had only before been with students like himself, or

in the company of Ignatius, and we could scarcely have felt surprised if Xavier had shut himself up in the solitude of his own cabin during the voyage. But it was during his time on ship-board that he really began his apostolic life, mixing freely with all, winning them gradually to give up their bad habits of swearing, and becoming a peace-maker in many quarrels. During the voyage, illness broke out, and there was no one to attend to the sick but Francis and his friends, who washed their linen, dressed their food, and fed them with the greatest care and gentleness. He soon persuaded many to go regularly to confession, and every Sunday he preached on the deck of the ship.

When they got as far as the island of Mozambique, S. Xavier was ill himself with fever, but during its height he would visit and instruct the others, hearing the confessions of the dying, and comforting them in their last hours with the sacraments of the Church. During this time news came to him one day of

the sudden death of a boy who, he was told, had never had any instruction, and Francis was filled with the keenest sorrow and self-reproach that even *one* soul which had been within his reach should have died in ignorance, although he knew that such an one was not responsible before God for what he did not know.

When Francis reached Goa, he found it full of vice and sin, but he was not cast down, and so vigorously did he work that in a few months' time there was a remarkable improvement visible. God gave him grace to see how to deal with different characters, how some could be won by great gentleness, and others by thoughts of hell, death, and judgment. Going about the streets, Francis would ask some one to give him a meal, and then, sitting down at the table, talk kindly and cheerfully to his host, call for the children, and, taking them in his arms, ask God to bless them. After a while great numbers of slaves and little children would run to him in the streets,

and follow, as he led the way, to our Blessed Lady's church, where he would sing the catechism to them, so that they might more easily remember it. In this way, all about the streets and houses of Goa, instead of bad or silly songs, the Christian faith was to be heard, even from children who could but just speak. Very often he would go up and down the town, tinkling a little bell in his hand to attract notice, crying out, "Faithful Christians, for the love which you bear to Christ, send your servants and children to hear the Christian doctrine."

Francis next made a journey to the Christians who had been newly converted, dwelling on the Fishery Coast, where he preached and taught, and administered the sacraments during the time he stayed there, to people who scarcely knew anything excepting that they *were* Christians, and who begged him to teach them some prayers. The greatest suffering was to find so many souls needing care which they could not have, and in one of his letters Francis said he wished he could visit all the Universities in

Europe, and get some of their learned men to come and work in those distant and neglected places to gain souls for Christ. But while his days were passed in labour, he gave the greater part of the night to prayer, begging God's blessing upon his work. In the villages he visited, the Saint spent much care in instructing the children, who then became his helpers, teaching the Creed and the Commandments to their parents, and getting such a hatred for idolatry, that when Francis heard of any sacrifice being offered to their false gods, he would go to the place with a band of children, who fell upon the idol with sticks, and heaped every abuse and outrage on it.

Very often S. Francis would persuade a whole village to come out and burn the temple and idol to the ground. In the accounts which he gave, by letter, to S. Ignatius and other fathers of the society, Xavier avowed that he obtained more conversions by means of the "Hail Mary" than in any other way. But his own sweetness of disposition, his

energy, his holiness, and lastly, the many miracles which God was pleased to work by his means, kept the people faithful to the truth they had received. In Goa he established the College of S. Paul, for training students to missionary work ; then he went to labour in Travancore with the same success which always attended him. While there, a young man was one day being carried to the grave, followed by his father and mother, and a numerous crowd, when S. Xavier met them, and the sorrowful parents asked him to restore their son to life. Their grief touched his heart, and he came and stood near the corpse, lifting up his eyes to heaven in prayer. Then, sprinkling the body with holy water, he took the young man's hand and raised him up in perfect life and health, and the people were so impressed by what had happened, that many immediately became Christians, and a large cross was set up to which many resorted who desired to see the ground where God's power had thus been shown.

From province to province, throughout Hindostan, this great missionary journeyed almost entirely on foot, his days a continual succession of prayer, labour, and miracle, for by the mere touch of his hand, or his blessing, many sick were immediately healed; so in the Molucca islands, in Ceylon, everywhere his foot rested, he gained triumphs for Christ.

Large books have been written describing the life and labours of this wonderful Apostle of the Indies, which yet have not contained accounts of all that he did, and in a short story of his work for God, it is not possible to speak of all the wonders which were joined to his teaching, but we must follow him as he goes to Japan.

While Francis was visiting Malacca, a native of Japan came there, on board a Portuguese ship, called Paul Auger. He had lived a bad life, and having, in a quarrel, killed another man, had fled from punishment and got on board this vessel. Francis met him, and induced him to go to the missionary college at

Goa, where he afterwards saw him again, and when the Saint started on his new undertaking, Paul Auger (now a Christian) was one of those who went with him, and, when they landed, found out his own family, who provided the missionaries with a lodging.

Here, in Japan, as in other places, S. Xavier received power to perform many miracles. One of the natives came to tell him of his daughter's death, and after a few minutes' prayer, the holy Francis bade him return to his home, where he would find her living. The man was both angry and unbelieving, but when his servants came running to tell him the strange news, he returned to see what had happened, and, bringing his daughter back to Francis, was baptized with her and the rest of his family.

After staying more than two years in Japan, the Saint returned to Hindostan to visit his converts, and inspect the college which he had commenced at Goa, but, on the voyage, many dangers surrounded the ship which carried him.

During one terrible storm, after hearing the confessions of the passengers, and leading them to submission to the holy Will of God, he went to a corner and became absorbed in prayer, where another of his companions found him immovable, before a crucifix. When three days had passed, he suddenly rose up, took a rope and flung a portion of his robe into the sea with it, calling on God to have pity upon all on board the vessel, and immediately there was a calm.

Having, at last, reached Malacca safely, S. Francis longed to go on a mission to China, and, in spite of many difficulties, he got as far as the island of Sancian. It seemed that God would treat His servant as He had, long before, treated His servant Moses, for though from this island Francis could see the land of his desire, it was made known to him that God accepted his intentions, but that the work in the great Chinese empire should be done by the hands of his brothers, not himself.

Francis had not been long upon the island

before he was seized with fever, from which he recovered after a fortnight's confinement. Then many sorrows and disappointments happened to him, for those who had promised to help in his design of going on to China failed him for want of courage. But very soon Francis was again struck with fever, and he felt sure that his death was approaching.

There was a scarcity of provisions on the island, and during his illness the Saint suffered real want, lying in a poor hut which scarcely sheltered him from the cold wind and rain, but with his crucifix in his hand all the time. When he was delirious, his talk was always of his mission to China, or murmuring short prayers in Latin, such as "Jesus, Fili David, miserere mei." So his illness went on, and for the last two days he could take nothing; then, on a Friday, the 2nd December, about two o'clock in the afternoon, he fixed his eyes with a fond gaze upon a crucifix, and murmuring, "In te Domine speravi, non confundar in

æternum," breathed his last with a heavenly joy gleaming upon his face in death.

When the body of Francis was placed on board the vessel, which was to carry it back to Malacca, it was found to be perfectly fresh and unchanged, and then those Portuguese who had been cold and neglectful to him in his illness, crowded round the coffin, weeping and lamenting his loss.

The plague had been raging in that part of Hindostan, but after the ship came into the harbour, and the sacred body was carried through the streets, it was immediately stayed, and many wonderful cures took place.

The remains of this great apostle were taken to Goa, where they rest even to this time, amongst the people to whom he carried the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.


We shall never find a life of more continuous sacrifice than that of S. Francis Xavier; we shall never find a death more worthy of such a life, in suffering and desolation amidst unfriendly hearts, upon the island of Sansian.

But with the support of God's love all around him, and an infinite confidence which filled his heart, there came faintly from his lips with his last breath, "In te Domini speravi."



BELOVED BY THE POOR

S. VINCENT DE PAUL

N the humble little farm-house of a village in the south of France, Vincent de Paul was born, in the year 1576. They were six children in all, and, like the rest, Vincent had to look after the sheep, carry grain to the mill, and help his parents in many ways. But as he grew older, he showed such signs of talent that his father, with some difficulty, placed him at school in Acqs, where he made such progress that he was afterwards engaged as tutor to the little sons of a gentleman there, whilst he still continued many of his own studies.

Vincent went next to Toulouse, where he remained seven years, and was then ordained

a priest, but where he said his first Mass is not known; all that he tells is, that he was obliged to do so in a private chapel, because the sense of his own unworthiness overwhelmed him with timidity. After this he was appointed to a parish, but as another claimed the place Vincent gave it up, and went to live near Toulouse, where he received several pupils, who grew very warmly attached to him. Business took him from here to Bordeaux, and on his return by sea he was captured by some African pirates, and taken as a prisoner to Tunis, where he was exposed for sale. A fisherman bought Vincent, and sold him again to a chemist, who treated him very kindly, and tried to persuade him to turn to the same occupation, promising to bequeath him his money. But the Saint only desired to regain his liberty, and every day implored the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, in whom he placed his trust, that he should be delivered.

However, at the death of his owner, Vincent was again sold to a man who had three wives,

and one of these would go and watch him digging in the fields, and ask him questions about the Christian's God. At last she wanted him to sing, and when he began the *Salve Regina*, she listened with great delight. It came out that the husband had been a Christian, but turned from his faith, and, impressed by what she heard from Vincent, this Turkish wife reproached him for giving up such a beautiful religion, and her words took such an effect upon him that he escaped with his slave to France, where he was reconciled to the Church, while Vincent made his way to Rome. From Rome he travelled to Paris, where he was received at the royal palace for a time, and then sought lodgings in another quarter of the city.

Whilst staying there, a magistrate accused Vincent of robbing him of a large sum of money, and drove him from the room which they shared, declaring him publicly to be a rogue and thief; he even carried his complaint to the superior of the Oratorians, whom Vin-

cent was visiting, and there accused him of this robbery. In spite of all this, the Saint was calm and quiet, never seeking to excuse himself, but simply replying, "God knows the truth."

He teaches us in this a beautiful lesson of patience under false accusations, and though he was content to be suspected of this wrong, God brought his innocence to light some years later, and then the magistrate begged most humbly to receive his pardon.

About this time Vincent, by the advice of his director, gave up the many high offices which were open to him, to be a priest in the parish of Clichy. Here he laboured unwearyingly amongst his people—never in a hurry, never too busy to have a kind word for those who needed it, and yet his duties were constant. God gave him a wonderful power of understanding the different characters of those with whom he had to deal, so that he could win the timid by his gentleness, as well as repress the bold by his severe words.

For three years S. Vincent pursued this way

of life, and then, by the advice of his director, gave up his much-beloved work amongst the poor of Christ to be chaplain and tutor to a family of high position. But, staying there, he lived as much as possible in retirement, and under his beautiful influence the whole family became pious and devoted to good works.

But the heart of this holy man was drawn to labour amongst the poor, and whenever the family went to their country residence, he set about instructing and catechizing the ignorant, and hearing confessions, in which he had very great success. For a few months Vincent left his position of chaplain, and during that absence the first thought of founding the Order of Charity occurred to him.

A pious lady, named Louisa de Marillac, asked the Saint to direct her in charitable employments, and he found others who willingly joined her in the duties of visiting the sick and relieving the poor. This was the first beginning of the congregation of the Sisters of Charity, which has now spread to every part

of the Christian world, for the assistance of all who suffer, and the instruction of the ignorant.

The next work of kindness which S. Vincent attempted was amongst the galley slaves, having obtained the office of their chaplain from the king, Louis XIII. When he paid his first visit, he was shocked by the suffering in which he found them; and, what was still more terrible to him was the foul language which was heard amongst the prisoners. But he did not shrink from these wretched creatures. To him they were souls for whom Jesus had shed His precious Blood, souls whom He loved so dearly that it was worth the work of a lifetime to reclaim even one from sin. So, by sweet persuasive words he won hearts which had been hardened by punishment, and those who had cursed and blasphemed, learned to kneel humbly as earnest prayers came from the lips they revered. For some time Vincent visited these prisoners daily, instructing and preparing them for the Sacraments, and

when he was obliged to be absent he placed some of his friends in charge of them.

During this period the Saint once met with a man who was in a state of despair at the thought of the misery of his family during his separation from them, upon which Vincent went to the chief authority, offering to take this prisoner's place if he could be released. The offer was accepted, and for several weeks the good man wore the chains of the galley slave, until the affair was discovered by his absence.

Another of S. Vincent's great works was the foundation of a hospital for poor deserted infants, which he thought of through finding a little child left in the cold, snowy streets one night without a home, whom he picked up and carried to some charitable ladies, who assisted him in forming a place for such cases to be received.

The principal undertaking of the holy Vincent's life was not begun until he was forty-eight years of age—this was the congregation

of the Mission. It began with himself and two others, who went from village to village catechizing, preaching, and hearing confessions; and God blessed their work, so that other priests came to join them, and the prior of a house in Paris, called "S. Lazarus," resigned his possessions to the use of these humble missionaries. At first Vincent was frightened at the thought of being established at the priory. In his humility he deemed it far above him and his brethren, and it was more than a year before the offer was accepted and the congregation removed there. Immediately some disputes and opposition were aroused, but they soon came to an end, and Vincent remained in possession of the priory of S. Lazarus.

Meanwhile Louisa de Marillac, or "Madame Le Gras," was toiling on in works of mercy amongst the poor surrounding her, clothing the destitute, nursing the sick, gathering little ignorant children around her, assisted by a company of devout women, who busied themselves thus in different towns and villages.

Then S. Vincent formed a little community under her control, which became dear to all hearts from their self-denying love and untiring zeal. As time went on, they began to receive orphans under their charge, and attend hospitals and sick convicts. Twenty-eight of these houses were founded in Paris alone during the Saint's life, and the good work spread throughout France and even to Poland.

It would not be possible to describe all the wise and holy works of Vincent's commencement. His was a long life, all given to God and his fellow-creatures, and during its close he preached more powerfully by his patient sufferings than even by his fervent words. For some years he was not able to walk, but he afterwards lost the use of his limbs, so that he could no longer stand at the altar. What a sacrifice this was could be known only to God, but his consolation was to hear Mass and communicate daily. Those who went to see him found him always cheerful and uncomplaining, directing those works of charity

which he could no longer actively perform. Every morning after Mass, he would repeat the prayers of the Church for the dying, and thus he awaited the call of his Lord. On the 26th of September, 1660, he was able to hear Mass and receive Communion, but he had scarcely been carried back before he fell into a heavy sleep, from which he was roused by the visit of the doctor, who pronounced him dying.

Then the priests of the Mission gathered round and besought his blessing, and Vincent raised his hand, beginning the words of benediction, but his voice failed, and he sank back exhausted. That night he received Extreme Unction, and early in the morning of the 27th September he died in the chair from which he had not been removed for twenty-four hours, so peacefully that he only seemed asleep. For nearly eighty-five years he had lived in the world, bearing its trials, fulfilling its duties—now the time for rest and reward had come.


Many hearts grieved when they heard that the grave had closed over Vincent de Paul.

But his work did not die with him ; it lives still in his sons, who preach the faith of Christ amongst the heathen in far-off regions ; in his daughters, who serve Jesus in the persons of His poor ; and every Catholic heart blesses the honoured name of the simple, humble Saint who worked wonders through the love of souls which he had learned at the foot of the crucifix, and sinking deeply within his heart, kindled there the holy fire which made him the great apostle of charity to the world.



THE FLOWER OF ASSISI

S. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

N the city of Assisi, in the year 1182, a little child was born in a stable on a bed of straw—not because his parents were poor, and had no other home, but because his mother had been told beforehand, by a holy pilgrim, that God wished the coming of Francis into the world thus, to resemble the birth of Jesus Christ in the cave of Bethlehem.

He received in baptism the name of John, in honour of the apostle who was so dear to our Lord; but when his father returned home after a long absence in France, and heard the news of a little son having been given him, he desired that he should be called Francis.

As he grew older, he was taught by pious men, and soon learned to read Latin and French with ease; and later he assisted his father in his business as a merchant. The character of Francis was generous and kind; all that he gained in trade he spent freely, not with a wasteful spirit, but because he loved to pour out his money to make others happy. He gave splendid banquets to his friends, and thus became the favourite of all the youths of his town, who named him "The Flower of Assisi." But during his popularity and pleasure, in spite of his love of gorgeous dress and all that was bright and beautiful, we hear that he was never known to utter or allow a coarse word or improper jest.

But God, who intended him for so holy a life, did not long leave Francis to continue this career of worldliness, and in His mercy a severe illness laid him aside, from which he rose up with a changed spirit, seeing at last that pleasure was not the true end for which he had been created. Although he felt a dis-

gust for the amusements he had formerly loved, many visions of fame and glory passed through his mind, which led him to take up arms as a soldier. But God once more sent sickness upon him, during which, in a vision of the night, the Holy Spirit spoke to his heart, reproaching him with deserting his Creator. Then Francis exclaimed, "O my God, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" "Return into the city," said the voice. "There it shall be told thee what thou hast to do."

Next morning the young man returned to Assisi, and his friends again chose him to lead their amusements; but Francis had lost his gaiety of spirit, and his absent manner showed that his heart was set upon other things.

Gradually he grew to be a great lover of prayer, and in this way the work of God grew manifest to others. His soul seemed penetrated with love to Christ, and compassionate charity towards the poor, and he would spend all he had, even dividing his clothing for the sick and suffering.

But a great longing filled his heart to do far more than this. He desired to be an exile from his own home, and begin a life of hardship and poverty, and one day at Rome, he was so carried away by this wish that, after praying at the tomb of the apostles, he came out amidst the crowd of beggars at the door of the church, and giving his rich cloak to one, from whom in exchange he took a ragged, dirty garment, he remained all day upon the steps of S. Peter's, asking alms.

Returning to Assisi, the devil tempted him with forming pictures in his mind of his early joyous life, his luxurious home, his splendid dress, his dreams of glory and greatness, but he took refuge in prayer, and God gave him strength to resist. He went to the old church of S. Damian, and there, before a crucifix, begged for light to know the divine Will, and grace to do always what was pleasing to God. Three times over he heard the words, "Go, Francis, and repair My house, which is falling into ruin;" and, not perfectly understanding their

meaning, he went to the priest with money, begging him to buy oil to supply a lamp for burning before the crucifix ; then, starting to Foligno, he sold his horse and some pieces of stuff, bringing the gold he received for them to the priest of S. Damian's, to repair the church. In the meantime his father heard what he was doing, and came, with several friends, to S. Damian's, in great anger, but Francis hid himself in a cave for nearly a month, begging God to give him courage to practise the holy virtue he had set before him. After that time he felt renewed strength and grace, so that he feared no longer to return to Assisi ; but he, who had only a few weeks before been called the flower of that city, was now pelted with stones and mud, whilst the people hissed and mocked him, declaring that he was mad ; yet Francis received these insults with joy, thanking God for allowing him to bear the cross.

Not so his father, Bernadone. When *he* was told that his son was making himself the

contempt and laughing-stock of Assisi, he rushed out, furious with anger, and striking Francis violently, dragged him into his house, imprisoning him in a dark cellar. His mother grieved exceedingly at this harsh treatment, and during her husband's absence on business, she released Francis, begging him, by his love for her, not to leave his family and the world; however, when she found her pleading was useless, she let him go peacefully, and Francis returned to S. Damian's once more.

Peter Bernadone reproached his wife bitterly when he came back, and set off at once in pursuit of his son; but Francis said firmly,

"I do not fear what you can do to me; it is a happiness for me to suffer like Jesus Christ."

Then the father asked for the price of the horse and the cloth, and after receiving it, he suspected he must have other money in his possession, and went with complaints to the magistrate, who summoned Francis to appear before him, but knowing that the bishop only had authority over one who had given himself

to the service of God, he refused to interfere. Bernadone then complained to the bishop, who sent for Francis, and made him restore to his father all the money he had.

"Trust in God," he said, kindly ; "He will give you all that is wanting for the good of His church."

The Saint rose, and took off all his rich clothes, keeping his hair-shirt alone ; then, laying them at the bishop's feet, he exclaimed,

"Till now I have called Peter Bernadone my father, but now I may with boldness say, Our Father Who art in heaven, for in Him I place all my faith and hope."

The bishop became from that moment his best friend and protector, covering him with his own cloak until some clothing could be found ; and at last a poor labourer's garment was brought, which Francis joyfully put on, first marking upon it with some mortar a large cross. He was not quite twenty-five years old at this time, but he had found the happiness of belonging to the poor of Christ Jesus, ex-

pecting nothing and receiving nothing but from Him.

Free now from all that had bound him to the world, Francis hastened into solitude, singing the love and praise of God as he traversed woods and mountains. Once he was met by robbers. "Who are you?" they asked; upon which the Saint told them he was a herald of the great King. Then they beat him, and cast him into a deep ditch filled with snow, bidding him rest there, but Francis rose up full of joy at having an opportunity of suffering for Christ, and began again to sing louder than before. Reaching a monastery he received alms like a beggar, and then journeyed on to Gubbio, where he began to serve lepers. At first this was a very hard and repulsive duty to take up for the love of God, for he had always had a horror of leprosy, but he set himself steadfastly to overcome this feeling of disgust, and before his death he declared that the service of lepers had been all sweetness to him.

His great charity was wonderfully blessed by God. Once upon meeting a man whose face was in a terrible state of disease, Francis kissed him on the cheek, which was healed immediately. After a time God's voice again called the Saint to the work of restoring the church of S. Damian, and he returned to Assisi, where many of his former friends reviled him, whilst others shed tears to behold the change which had passed over him; but Francis was indifferent to all, and toiled on from morning till night like a common labourer; and he also repaired the little chapel of the Portiuncula. During this labour the priest of S. Damian's provided him with necessary food, and Francis accepted his charity for some days, but this was not sufficient to satisfy that craving after perfect poverty; this was not—for him—the life of a follower of Christ, Who was born homeless, and buried in the tomb of a stranger; so the next day he went from door to door begging his bread, which he sat down to eat at the corner of the street.

Peter Bernadone was more than ever angry now, and cursed his son if he chanced to meet him. Francis, feeling this very bitterly, searched for a poor old man, a beggar also, whom he took for his father, and whenever he was cursed by his father Bernadone, he would turn to the old beggar asking for his blessing. In the year 1208 Francis cast away his shoes, and putting on a coarse ash-coloured tunic, and girding himself with a cord, went amongst his fellow-citizens preaching penance, in which he was presently joined by another citizen of Assisi, named Bernard, who was also very holy, and filled with a spirit of poverty.

On the same day Peter of Catania begged to be allowed to join himself with them, and all three went together to the church to ask God's blessing, and as the beautiful simple custom of those days was, they opened the Book of the Holy Gospels three times, thereby to obtain a knowledge of what the Almighty desired of them.

At the first opening Francis read, "If thou

wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor." The second time it was, "Take nothing for your journey." And the last words were, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." "Behold the counsels God would have us follow," said Francis; so then they sold all they had, giving the price amongst the poor, and went to dwell in a poor deserted little hut in the plain of Rivo-Torto. Seven days after, another citizen of Assisi sought to discover his friends, but he knew not where to find them, so he prayed earnestly to God that he might be guided to them, and following an unknown road, he came upon Francis praying in a wood, so he knelt down, and begged to be received into the little company. This brother, named Egidius, led always a most saintly life, having a great spirit of prayer.

But these devout men could not always remain in the solitude they had chosen; from time to time they went about teaching the

truth of God, many others coming to join them; and God made known to Francis that He would spread their company abroad through all the world, for the salvation of many souls. At length the Saint called his sons to assemble together to tell what they had done amongst men for Christ, and to form rules by which they were to be guided, and they journeyed to Rome to ask the protection and guidance of the Pope Innocent III. He received them in the presence of his cardinals, some of whom objected to the very great poverty which Francis proposed for his order; but being enlightened by God in prayer, the Holy Father Innocent gave his approval to the rule of the company, which continued to increase rapidly.

Francis and his disciples made many journeys into different parts, gathering followers together, working miracles and founding convents, preaching peace by Christ and penance for sin. Throughout Italy and Spain he travelled, and on to the East, where he was captured by the Saracens and taken before

the Sultan. To him Francis preached so earnestly the doctrine of one God in three persons, that he was entreated to remain, whereupon he said he would stay, if the Sultan and his people would be converted to the true Church of God. He was set free, and sent safely to Damietta on his way home; but to this day a remembrance of his work in the East remains, for his friars minor are there still guarding the sepulchre of Christ.

Many long and serious illnesses occurred to Francis during his labours, and many trials and temptations were allowed by God, to perfect his holiness and love for Christ. Once when praying in his cell the devil whispered to him that he was too old to bear such long watchings, and that he needed more sleep, upon which the Saint rose up, and going into the fields, flung himself into the midst of some thorn bushes all covered with snow, so that he might make his body suffer, rather than listen to the tempter. Then a bright light surrounded him, and roses appeared upon the

thorn bushes, and angel voices said, "Francis, hasten to the church, for Jesus and His Mother are there." He obeyed, gathering first twelve white and twelve red roses, and, prostrate before our Lord, he begged of Him to grant a day when an indulgence should be attached to that holy place. Jesus replied that it should be from the evening of the day upon which S. Peter was delivered from his chains until the evening of the following day, and the choir of angels chanted the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving.

Francis then gathered three of each colour of the miraculous roses to send to the Pope, in testimony of what had happened, and the Holy Father caused the great Indulgence to be solemnly published. This was the beginning of the indulgence of the *Portiuncula*, and there the faithful for many generations have lost their burden of sin, and received the pardon of Christ according to His promise to S. Francis, whilst we at a distance from those sacred places, can by faith in that promise, and by love to the holy humble saints of God,

share in the same privilege, and receive the same gift of healing, as those who can journey to the far-off plains of Assisi, and kneel before the altars of the church of S. Mary of the Angels.

Now we must follow our Saint to the mountain where he received the marks of the cross of Christ, toiling with him up the steep ascent of Alvernia. There a little cell was made at the foot of a beautiful beech-tree, where S. Francis, believing the time of his death to be approaching, desired to retire alone with God, and prepare for his departure. The birds showed their joy at the coming of the gentle Saint by singing joyously above his head, perching upon his shoulders and his arms, to the great surprise of his companions; and having desired that Brother Leo should bring him a little bread and water, and no one else be suffered to approach, Francis shut himself up in his cell, and began to be wholly absorbed in contemplating God.

As the Feast of the Assumption drew near

the holy man sought for a still more lonely hiding-place, and when they had searched long they found one, but a frightful chasm in the rock prevented them getting to it. Then they put across the chasm a tree, to serve as a bridge, and here S. Francis dwelt in solitude, whilst once in the day and once in the night Brother Leo visited him. Wonderful visions were sent to him from God during this time, and he became more and more full of divine sweetness and love. One day S. Francis was praying earnestly for two graces before he died ; first, that he might feel in his soul and body as much as was possible what the sufferings of Jesus had been in His Passion ; the second, that he might have in his heart as much as was possible of that burning love which caused Christ to long to suffer for enemies. For a great while he continued praying thus until he believed God had heard his request, and then he began to fix all his mind upon the infinite charity of Christ in His most bitter Passion, so that his heart

glowed and melted within him for love of the crucified One. Then a seraph came down from heaven with six fiery wings, and St Francis observing his approach, saw that he bore the image of Jesus crucified; two wings were spread over the head, two covered the body, and two were outspread in flying. Francis was filled with joy and grief and wonder—joy at the presence of his Lord, grief at beholding Him crucified, and wonder at the strangeness of the vision.

When all Alvernia seemed wrapt in fire, which glowed over the mountains and valleys round, Christ in this seraph's form spoke secretly to Francis, leaving in his heart an excessive love, and upon his flesh the marks of the sacred Passion. Upon his hands and feet there were the traces of nails, as if, like the Hands and Feet of Jesus, they, too, had been pierced; and upon his right side there was the mark of an open wound, from which drops of blood often fell, staining his habit. These most sacred marks of the love of Christ gave

great happiness to S. Francis, and yet they caused him such pain that he was forced to reveal his secret to Brother Leo, who touched and dressed the wounds on all days excepting from Thursday evening till Saturday morning, when he would not allow the suffering to be lessened, that so he might unite more closely in the agonies Christ bore during those hours ; afterwards Francis allowed the two other brothers, who had journeyed with him to Alvernia, to see and kiss his hands ; then leaving them there with his blessing, he returned, to pass amongst the towns and villages preaching always the love of Christ crucified.

But the Saint had not long to live ; his sickness increased, and he begged to be carried to S. Mary of the Angels, to die where he had first begun the life of grace. The last day he called his children together, and, blessing them, desired to be laid upon the ground whilst the Passion of Christ was read to him, and on the evening of the 4th October he passed peacefully away, one of his brethren seeing his soul

ascend to heaven under the appearance of a brilliant star.

Thus God rewarded the burning love and deep humility of His holy servant Francis; thus He fulfilled the promise given by Christ, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."



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